

## **Focus on the Accra Declaration adopted by the Sixth ACP Summit**

The Sixth ACP Summit of Heads of States and Government was held in Accra (Ghana) from 2 -3 October 2008. The main theme for the Accra deliberations was "Promoting Human Security and Development". ACP leaders had the opportunity to exchange views and articulate a common position which is contained in the **Accra Declaration** on the global challenges confronting the international community in general and ACP countries in particular such as the energy crisis, the food price crisis, the financial crisis, climate change, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations.

ACP leaders are of the view that human security and sustainable human development cannot be achieved when the following basic principles are undermined. They include sovereignty, territorial integrity and non interference in the internal affairs of States, peaceful settlement of conflicts, respect of international agreements, as well as the right of peoples to build their own political systems in an environment of peace, stability and justice.

Having recognized that elections are often the source of violence in their countries, ACP leaders took the commitment to promote better management of electoral processes and the deepening of democracy among their citizens and societies to guarantee peaceful and credible elections, as well as acceptance of such elected governments throughout the ACP Group. It should be signaled that Ghana, the host country was confronted with two delegations alleging each one to be the legal representation of Mauritania following the coup orchestrated on 6 August 2008, and this embarrassing situation even delayed the smooth beginning of the preparatory meetings.

Under Climate change, ACP leaders reiterated their support for a post-Kyoto Climate Agreement that recognizes that forests represent considerable economic, environmental and social benefits for the lives and development of their populations. In that context, they urged their development partners to mobilize and provide adequate resources and incentives, including market-based mechanisms, in support of the efforts of ACP States to effectively manage tropical forests and river basins. They also called for adequate and dedicated resources to be allocated to prevent and fight against desertification, coastal erosion and the encroachment of the sea since these are threats to infrastructures and human lives in various African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

With regard to energy, ACP leaders share the view that the current energy model based on fossil fuels is neither sustainable nor environmentally viable. They therefore called on the international community to agree on a global strategy to stabilize oil prices at affordable levels in order to protect the growth prospects of developing countries. They reiterated their commitment to develop alternative sources of energy as a means of mitigating the impact of rising oil prices. The impact of their action will be limited in the absence of a concerted international action. For that reason, they urged the United Nations to convene an International Summit. That Summit will endeavour to address the problems, particularly for Net-Fuel Importing Developing Countries, and propose solutions to high oil prices and their impact on the livelihoods of people.

The Food price crisis also received specific attention from ACP Heads of States and Government. The ACP leaders' assessment is that the current food crisis and its humanitarian impact could be alleviated through increased production, productivity, sharing best practices and experiences, as well as the development and strengthening of agricultural value added activities as an effective means of enhancing access to affordable nutritive food products at national and regional levels. Since assistance from cooperating partners and international institutions in overcoming the structural and systemic problems of food security in ACP countries is essential, ACP leaders welcomed the European Commission proposal to establish a 1 billion euro Food Facility for a rapid response to soaring food prices in developing countries and requested the Commission to extend the benefits of this Facility to all ACP States.

With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, it is ACP leader's view that the current financial crisis could impede economic growth and their attainment, since this could lead to serious contraction of resources affected to financing development. They called on the international community and financial institutions to urgently examine the current financial crisis causes and expeditiously implement specific measures to mitigate the impact on developing countries, particularly in ACP States.

Regarding EPAs, Heads of States and governments noted that some ACP States have initiated the full EPA concept, while others have expressed serious concerns about both the process and content, in particular in relation to the interim EPAs. They reiterated the need for the EC to offer alternative trading arrangements to ACP States not in a position to conclude EPAs. Discussions merely focused on the need for flexibility from the EC side in the subsequent process of negotiations. Several ACP countries even recalled the EU Council's conclusions at its meeting of 26 and 27 May 2008 underlining "the need for a flexible approach" in relation to "problematic issues" and "call(ing) on the Commission to use all WTO-compatible flexibility and asymmetry, in order to take account of the needs and levels of development of the ACP countries and regions".

The Accra Declaration underlines that further progress in the EPA process must be based on adequately addressing these legitimate concerns that would allow for all ACP States to become part of the Agreements. It is in that context that ACP Heads of States and governments took the decision to send a Troika consisting of the Chairperson of the Africa Union, and those of CARIFORUM and Pacific Summits, and headed by the President of the ACP Summit to engage in high level consultations on the EPAs, with a number of EU States. They also mandated the Council of Ministers to pursue the consideration of establishing an ACP Free Trade Area. Achieving that objective will provide ACP Group with a common framework vis-à-vis the EC, consolidate intra-ACP trade and enhance the cohesion and solidarity of the ACP Group.

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